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RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 0842  
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 0079  
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY 0858  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 0265  
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR 2095

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PESHAWAR 000091

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 2/23/2016  
TAGS: [KISL](#) [ASEC](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PK](#)  
SUBJECT: CHIEF MINISTER ON PESHAWAR RIOTS

REF: A) PESHAWAR 79 B) PESHAWAR 86

CLASSIFIED BY: Gautam Rana, Political Officer, U.S. Consulate ,  
Department of State.  
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) Chief Minister Akram Khan Durrani recently discussed the 2/15 Peshawar protests (Ref A) with us. He said police are currently reviewing television and video footage of the riots and will arrest protestors who broke the law. He outlined a two-pronged security plan for future marches: 1) protest leaders will guarantee and be held accountable for the safety of processions; and 2) the NWFP government will install video cameras in important public areas to record and monitor future demonstrations. Durrani disavowed the need to "crackdown" on Afghans or to implement martial law, arguing the latter would suppress the voice of the people. The JUI-F leader avoided criticizing the fatwa announced by a JUI-F cleric against the Danish cartoonists (Ref B). End summary.

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Responding to the February 15 Protests  
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¶2. (C) Durrani denounced the Danish cartoons for further enflaming a divided world, and maintained protests in Pakistan were a natural reaction by Muslims to vent their anger. However, the destruction was not acceptable, and the police had been ordered to review television and video footage to identify and punish lawbreakers. The Chief Minister claimed thirty percent of the rioters were Afghans, while the others were largely criminals or business rivals settling scores. Durrani downplayed the role of madrassah students, alleging that video footage "proved" the protestors were wearing secular clothes and not the apparel favored by religious students. He also drew a distinction between previous protests organized by the religious parties that were peaceful and the violent demonstrations of 2/15 that were ostensibly sponsored by the business community - citing this as additional evidence that the MMA was not culpable for the violence.

¶3. (C) The Chief Minister laughed when asked about Governor Khalilur Rehman's public comments that para-military units (Section 144) needed to be deployed in Peshawar in the aftermath of the riots. According to Durrani, the Governor never spoke to him about the subject, and it was merely an "irresponsible"

press play. Imposing Section 144 would mean curbing the voice of the people, which would be antithetical to democracy. He emphasized that if Pakistan's national leaders served as "true spokesmen" for the people, there would be no need for protests.

14. (C) The Chief Minister outlined a two-pronged plan to ensure public safety during future demonstrations. First, organizers will be held responsible for guaranteeing peaceful demonstrations. Second, the NWFP government will install video cameras in important public areas to record and monitor marches.

15. (C) Durrani asserted upcoming protests on February 24 would be peaceful because the organizers will join the marchers and control the crowds. He noted he has no personal plans to march here or on Islamabad, stressing his job is to run the NWFP government, unlike MMA party workers who carry out overall party strategy.

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Fatwa  
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16. C) When asked about the fatwa announced by Maulana Yusuf Qureshi, a cleric associated with the Chief Minister's political party, Durrani responded by noting an Indian state minister had also issued a fatwa against the Danish cartoonists. He later added that Qureshi was speaking only for himself, and not the JUI-F, but avoided any criticism of the Maulana's fatwa. (Note: According to press reports, Uttar Pradesh Haj Minister Yaqub Qureshi offered 500 million Indian rupees to anyone beheading the Danish cartoonist who caricatured the Prophet Muhammad. The UP government has filed a criminal case against the minister for inflammatory and criminal speech. End note.)

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The Role of Afghans in the Riots  
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17. (C) The NWFP government would not take any steps to "crack down" on Afghans living in Peshawar, maintained Durrani. He explained the situation in Afghanistan remained troubled, and if the refugees were forced to return, they would soon come back to Pakistan given the porous border. Nonetheless, Afghans had participated in the riots, and those who were criminals would be punished. Although press reports mentioned the provincial government would "monitor" Afghans, the Chief Minister outlined no specific measures to do so.

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Comment  
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18. (C) Chief Minister Durrani was one of the more responsible MMA leaders during and after the 2/15 demonstrations: he called for peaceful protests and emphasized lawbreakers would be punished. However, he has unconvincingly disavowed MMA influence over the protests and the ensuing violence. If the Chief Minister implements his security plan, it is a hopeful sign he is willing to do more to deter violence in the future. End comment.  
SPANGLER